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THAUMASTOCEPHALINI, A NEW TRIBE OF PSELAPHINAE
FOR *THAUMASTOCEPHALUS FOLLICULIPALPUS* N. GEN.,
N. SP., AN INTERESTING NEW TROGLOBIOUS SPECIES
FROM CENTRAL DALMATIA (CROATIA)

(COLEOPTERA, STAPHYLINIDAE, PSELAPHINAE)

INTRODUCTION

For many years, one of the junior authors (T. R.) has been studying the troglobious Mollusca, mainly in Central Dalmatia, but he also collected other groups of animals. A number of very interesting, mostly new taxa were found, belonging to a variety of different taxonomic groups: fishes, sponges, Polychaeta, Crustacea, Insecta, etc. The examination of the collected material by corresponding specialists, or in cooperation with them, is at present in progress. The Coleoptera were successively remitted for study to the Entomological Department of the Croatian Natural History Museum in Zagreb. Among others, as a result of this research activity, A. Casale (at that time in Torino) and B. Jalžić (Zagreb) described in 1988 the “exceptional troglobitic” *Radziella styx* n. gen., n. sp. (Coleoptera, Cholevinae, Leptodirini), collected during the period 1983-1985 in two pits on Biokovo Mountain.

At the end of 1997, some of the few Pselaphinae collected by T. R. were entrusted for study to two of the junior authors (G. N. & D.

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P.). This material included some formerly recorded species, as well as one new species of the genus *Bryaxis* Kugelann. However, the greatest surprise was a female specimen collected in April 1984, in a small pit, named “Mala Birnjača” on Kozjak mountain (near Split), at about 700 m, which could not be assigned to any of the pselaphid genera represented in Europe. In fact, two specimens were collected together, but one remained in the Museum of Zagreb, and was not examined on that occasion.

Because there are not so extensive reference collections of Pselaphinae in Beograd, or all necessary literature that should enable an appropriate placement of such an extraordinary new representative, a draft of the description including the most important morphological characters of this new pselaphid, with a figure, was sent to the senior author (R. P.), to get his opinion.

His absolutely unexpected answer, in June 1998, was that the description of the same new beetle was already in print in Italy on the basis of a single female collected by A. C. some years before.

What had happened?

In summer 1986 A. C. had explored with his father the “Vranjača pećina” near Kotlenice (Split), a well known cave, equipped for tourists with cement path and electric lighting, and in that occasion he collected, among other species, one pselaphid not referable to any described genus. During the following years A. C. prepared description and illustrations but, finding difficulties in the tribal placing of the new genus, in 1997 contacted R. P. proposing a common work on the beetle. The lacking of male had not allowed R. P. and A. C. to describe a new tribe, also if the supposition was advanced; the paper was lastly concluded in spring 1998 and submitted to the printer in Genova.

As soon as informed about the other findings in Dalmatia, the Italian authors withdrew the manuscript of their paper and, as a result of an exchange of correspondence, it was agreed to publish the joint description of the new pselaphid by the two groups of workers who nearly simultaneously were involved in the discovery and the study of this new taxon.

In the meantime, efforts have been made to collect additional specimens of the new species, emphasising on finding a male speci-

men, which could better facilitate the establishment of the taxonomic position of the new taxon. For that purpose, in August 1998, the “Mala Birnjača” was visited by T. R. and G. N. and the former was lucky enough to find under stones, after an hour of searching, a male and a female specimen of the species. An extremely happy and rare event, for in many similar situations the searching of additional, indispensable specimens of a new taxon remains unsuccessful. A few weeks later, during a second visit to the pit by T. R., one more female specimen of the same pselaphid species was found. At that time, the second specimen, also a female, collected in 1984, retained initially in the Museum in Zagreb, was remitted to the authors for examination.

The materials were so sufficient for a detailed description, final object of this paper, which is the result of the efforts of five persons living in five towns of three different countries (Croatia, Italy and Yugoslavia). The authors were all involved, according to their individual competence, in a joint work of scientific cooperation which probably has no precedent in the coleopterological field, moreover if we consider that researches and contacts were carried on together also in the worst period of the international crisis which affected some regions of the former Yugoslavia in 1999: a hope for a future of peace.

Thaumastocephalus n. gen.
(Thaumastocephalini n. trib.)

Description. Anophthalmous pselaphid Batrisitae characterised by: peculiar pedunculate gular process; 2nd and 3rd segments of maxillary palps bringing at the exterior side a thin filament ending in a spherical appendix; procoxae and mesocoxae contiguous; metacoxae separated.

Type of the genus: *T. folliculipalpus* n. sp.

Derivatio nominis: from the Greek words θαυμαστός, wonderful, and κεφαλή, head; gender: masculine.

Taxonomic position. According to the most recent phylogenetic and cladistic reviews (NEWTON & THAYER 1995) the “old” family Pselaphidae must be regarded as subfamily (Pselaphinae) of the large family Staphylinidae.

For the short mesotrochanters the new genus belongs to the informal division "Brachyscelia"; for the separated metacoxae and the asymmetrical aedeagus, with no clear parameres, it fits in the supertribe Batrisitae, to which the three tribes Metopiasini, Batrisini and Amauropini are currently assigned (JEANNEL 1955; NEWTON & CHANDLER 1989; NEWTON & THAYER 1992; NEWTON & THAYER 1995).

Metopiasini (olim "Metopiini"), with 6 genera and about 40 species from Central and Southern America, are well characterised by the geniculated antennae, inserted on a very extended frontal lobe.

Batrisini, with about 200 genera and 1700 species from nearly all the world, have normal antennae, a robust second tarsal claw and the metatarsal penultimate segment close in length to following one.

Amauropini (olim "Amauropsini"), with 12 genera and about 110 species from w-palearctic and nearctic regions, have normal antennae, a thin second tarsal claw and the metatarsal penultimate segment close in length to preceding one.

We deeply hoped that the new genus could be inserted in some of the listed tribes, but the characters (particularly on head and palpi) are so peculiar and differentiated from any other pselaphids that we are forced to propose a new tribe:

Thaumastocephalini n. trib.

The new genus *Thaumastocephalus* is here designated as type of the new tribe.

As a separation of the new tribe from generic diagnostic characters would be somewhat arbitrary and unjustified, hence we have included a single description, which is intended for both tribe and genus. Our choice is supported by a recent decision assumed in an analogue situation by NEWTON & THAYER 1995, who gave a single description for both a new genus (*Protopselaphus*) and the related new subfamily (Protopselaphinae).

The key for Batrisitae given by JEANNEL 1955 can be adapted as follows.

1. - Geniculated antennae, inserted on a very extended frontal lobe. Metopiasini Raffray, 1904

- 1'. - Not geniculated antennae; normal frontal lobe. 2
2. - Presence of a pedunculate gular process; 2nd and 3rd segments of maxillary palps bringing at the exterior side a thin filament ending in a spherical appendix. ... Thaumastocephalini nov.
- 2'. - Absence of a pedunculate gular process; maxillary palps not as above. 3
3. - Metatarsal penultimate segment close in length to preceding one; thin second tarsal claw. Amauropini Jeannel, 1948
- 3'. - Metatarsal penultimate segment close in length to following one; robust second tarsal claw. Batrisini Reitter, 1882

Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus n. sp.

Description. Length 2,2 mm; apterous, anophthalmous; reddish-testaceous; body bright, with sparse pubescence, more dense at the sides of head and on elytra (fig. 1).

Head much longer (0,40-0,43 mm) than wide (0,27-0,30 mm), slightly longer and clearly narrower than pronotum, flattened dorso-ventrally. Frontal lobe 0,20 mm wide. At the sides, just after the evident antennal tubercles, a deep notch is present, behind which the head has its greatest width; then the sides, with no prominent temples, converge toward base forming a narrow neck. Dorsal surface, totally lacking ridges or punctuation, strongly impressed at level of antennal tubercles and lateral notches; posteriorly flat and imperceptibly convex; tentorial foveae distinct. Thin and curved whitish setae, 0,076 mm long, are sparse on dorsal surface and are denser on lateral ridges and at level of temples. The postantennal notch, if sidewise examined, corresponds to a rather deep fovea, covered with setae. Eyes absent. Gular area very peculiar, with a median, conspicuous, spherical and bright process, basally slightly pedunculate and directed backwards, which is very perceptible in lateral view (fig. 7).

Maxillary palps very characteristic. 2nd segment thin and filiform at the base, then roughly enlarged like a triangle; the exterior corner gets narrower to a very thin filament at which apex a quite spherical appendix is articulated, while on the interior corner the articulation

of the 3rd segment is present. 3rd segment with a transverse body, stumpy triangular-like, which has in the exterior side an appendix basally filiform and then spherical exactly as in the second segment, but the filiform part here is shorter. 4th segment transverse, twice wider than 3rd, with no filiform appendices; proximally globose, gets narrower, like a lamina, towards the internal side of the palp, where it is covered with dense setae.

Antennae 0,71 mm long, relatively thin and slender. I antennomere (scape) cylindrical, 0,133 mm long, about 3 times longer than wide; II antennomere oval, 0,085 mm long, almost longer than wide; III-VIII antennomeres suboval, from 0,038 to 0,047 mm long, but all slightly longer than wide (V and VII somewhat more robust than other ones); IX as long as wide (0,038 mm); X slightly wider than long (0,047); XI suboval, 0,152 mm long, with pubescence denser than on the other antennomeres.

Pronotum subglobose, with convex and bright surface, slightly longer (0,37-0,43 mm) than wide (0,35-0,40 mm); maximal width a little forward the middle; no sulci or pleural ridges: only a small longitudinal basal fovea and a narrow antebasal sulcus are present; posterior margin slightly protruding.

Elytra subtriangular, combined wider (0,63-0,70 mm) than long at the suture (0,55-0,62 mm); posterior edge strongly concave; posterior angles thickened and protruding, though rounded; convex surface covered with yellowish and posteriorly oriented setae, about 0,057 mm long in the proximal part and till 0,142 mm long in the distal part. Humeral area rounded; no foveae or sulci present; scutellar triangle slightly sunken; only traces of the likely soldered suture, which is raised in the distal third. Metathoracic wings not present.

Legs fairly strong, without peculiar characters. Procoxae and mesocoxae largely contiguous; metacoxae clearly separated. Protrochanters triangular, mesotrochanters transverse, with a small but sharp thorn at the posterior edge; metatrochanters long triangular. Tarsi moderately long and 3-articulated; 1st segment very short, 2nd very long (equivalent to one half of the total tarsus length); 3rd thin, as long as one half of the 2nd and bearing at the apex one single claw, which is as long as the 3rd segment.

Abdomen with sparse pubescence, thicker on the sides, with setae 0,057 mm long. 1st visible tergite well wider (0,65 mm) than

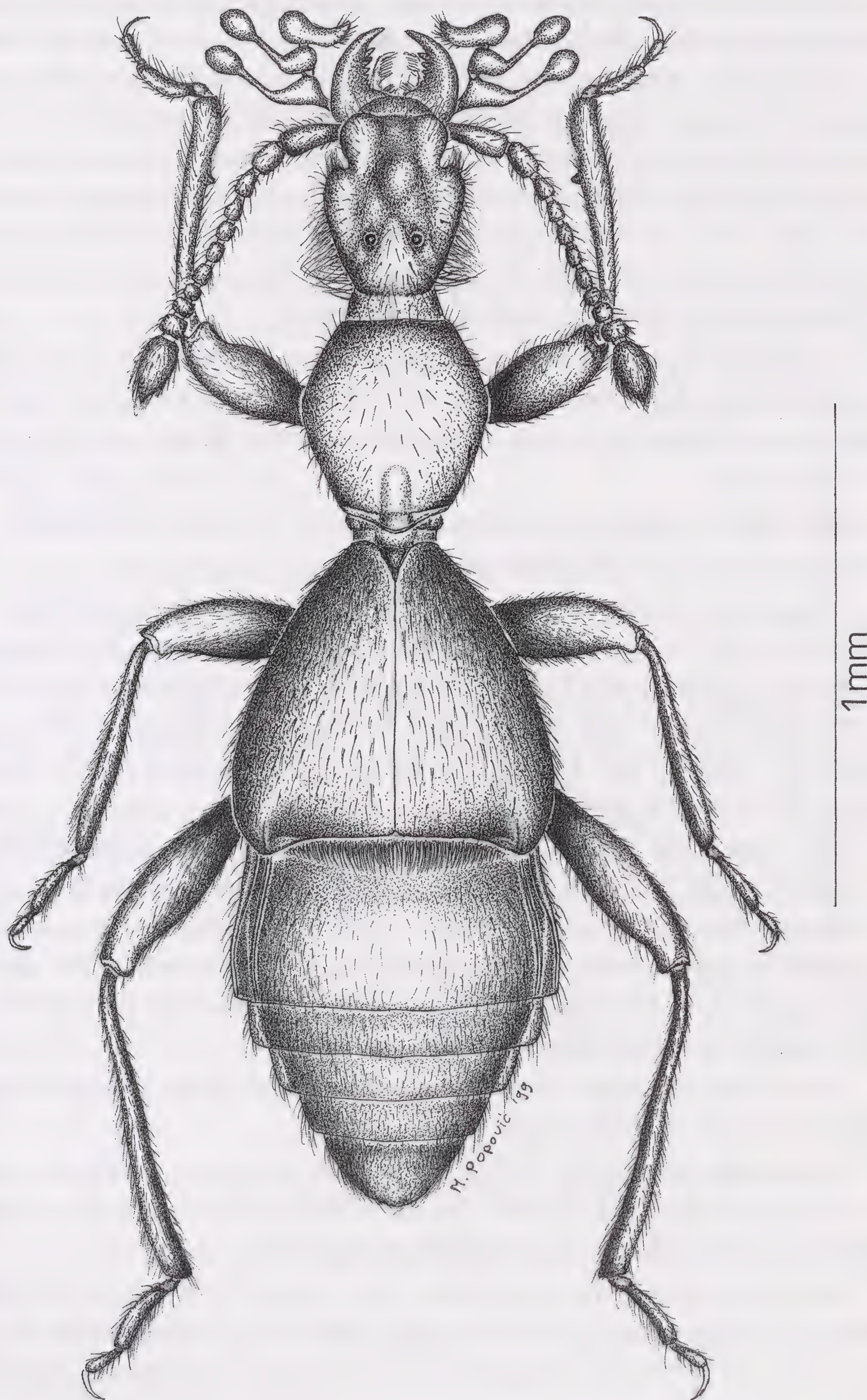


Fig. 1 - *Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus* n. gen., n. sp. (♂).

long (0,40 mm), with regularly convex and bright surface and a clear lateral edge; basally with a large transverse impression, covered with a series of thick setae oriented backwards; at each side of the impression it is present a small fovea from whose exterior edge a thin ridge arises, which runs lengthways across the tergite, converging to the lateral edge till the middle of the tergite length and then passing parallel to the ridge, near it, till the posterior border. 2nd and 3rd visible tergites with lateral edges; 4th with lateral edge obliterated in distal portion; pygidium with an evident medial bright fovea.

1st visible sternite basally bringing a transverse series of thick setae similar to those ones present at the base of the 1st visible tergite. Mesosternum anteriorly with a piligerous fovea. Metasternum medially impressed.

Secondary sexual characters. The male shows a large series of pronounced sexual characters, as follows.

All parts of the body of the male (fig. 1) are more slender than in the female (fig. 2), first of all the head and the pronotum. The head of the female is posteriorly, before the neck area, regularly and obviously narrowed, the same part in the male is progressively and feebly narrowed; the lateral edge behind the notch in the male is feebly angulate, in the female it is rounded.

The pronotum in the male is less rounded, slightly longer than its width; in the female it is more rounded, nearly as long as broad. The basal small fovea in the male is rather deep, elongate, reaching the posterior margin of the pronotum; in the female, this pit is less pronounced. The posterior margin of the pronotum in the male is a little more protruding than in the female.

The posterior angles of the elytra (fig. 1) are more thickened and evident in the male than in the female.

The metasternum (fig. 6) has in the male a median, elongate, shallow, triangular impression with the apex situated between the middle coxae; in the female it is only slightly impressed.

The metatrochanter in the male (fig. 8) has on the inner margin a small pointed process, which seems, however, to be obtuse when observed from a different angle. The pro- and mesotrochanters have a short and broad triangular prolongation, which is more feebly developed in the female.

The protibia of the male (fig. 9) has on the inner margin, before the middle, a small obtuse thorn followed by a gentle concavity, and then two very small swellings.

There are also small differences in the maxillary palps. The basal part of the 2nd and of the 3rd segment is somewhat longer than in the female, the 2nd segment apically visibly narrowed. The last segment is in the male longer, in the female broader.

On the pygidium of the female (fig. 3), near the posterior margin, which is deeply notched, there is a semicircular rather deep impression. In the male (fig. 4), this impression is shallow, with the deeper part situated anteriorly, and covers a great part of the pygidial surface. The posterior margin is scarcely notched and preceded by a semicircular chagrined surface.

The operculum (fig. 5) is simple, of an elongate, triangular form.

Aedeagus: asymmetrical, with no evident parameres; see fig. 10.

Derivatio nominis: from the Latin words *folliculus* and *palpus*, v.i.z. palp remembering a piligerous follicle.

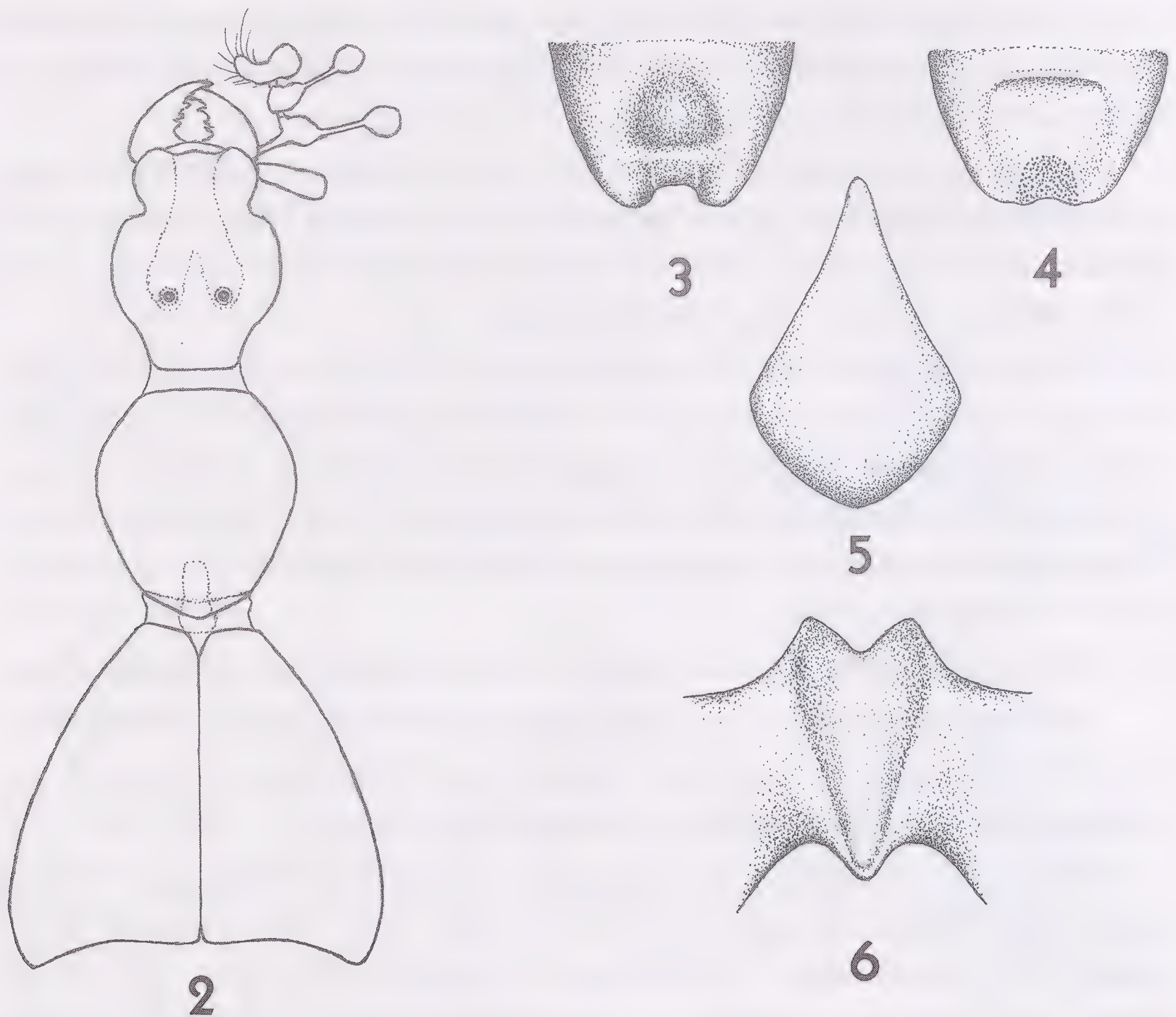
Types. Holotype: ♂, Dalmatia: Kozjak pl., Malacka, 700 m, jama (pit) "Mala Birnjača", 19.VIII.1998, leg. Tonči Rađa. Paratypes: 1 ♀, same data; 2 ♀♀, same locality, 1.IV.1984, leg. Tonči Rađa; 1 ♀, Dalmatia: Mosor pl., Kotlenice, pećina (cave) "Vranjača", 30.VIII.1986, leg. Andrea Colla. Holotype and 1 paratype in the collection of the Hrvatski prirodoslovni muzej, Zagreb (Croatia); 1 paratype in the collection of the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale "G. Doria", Genova (Italy); 1 paratype in the collection of G. Nonveiller and D. Pavićević (Zemun/Beograd, Yugoslavia); 1 paratype (from Vranjača) in the collection of A. Colla, Museo Civico di Storia Naturale, Trieste (Italy).

NOTES ABOUT LIFE-HISTORY

At the moment nothing is known about life habits of *Thaumastocephalus*.

What use can it do of the pedunculate gular process, present in both the sexes?

The mandibular morphology suggests that the beetle is a predator (perhaps of Collembola, like many of its relatives), but what is the

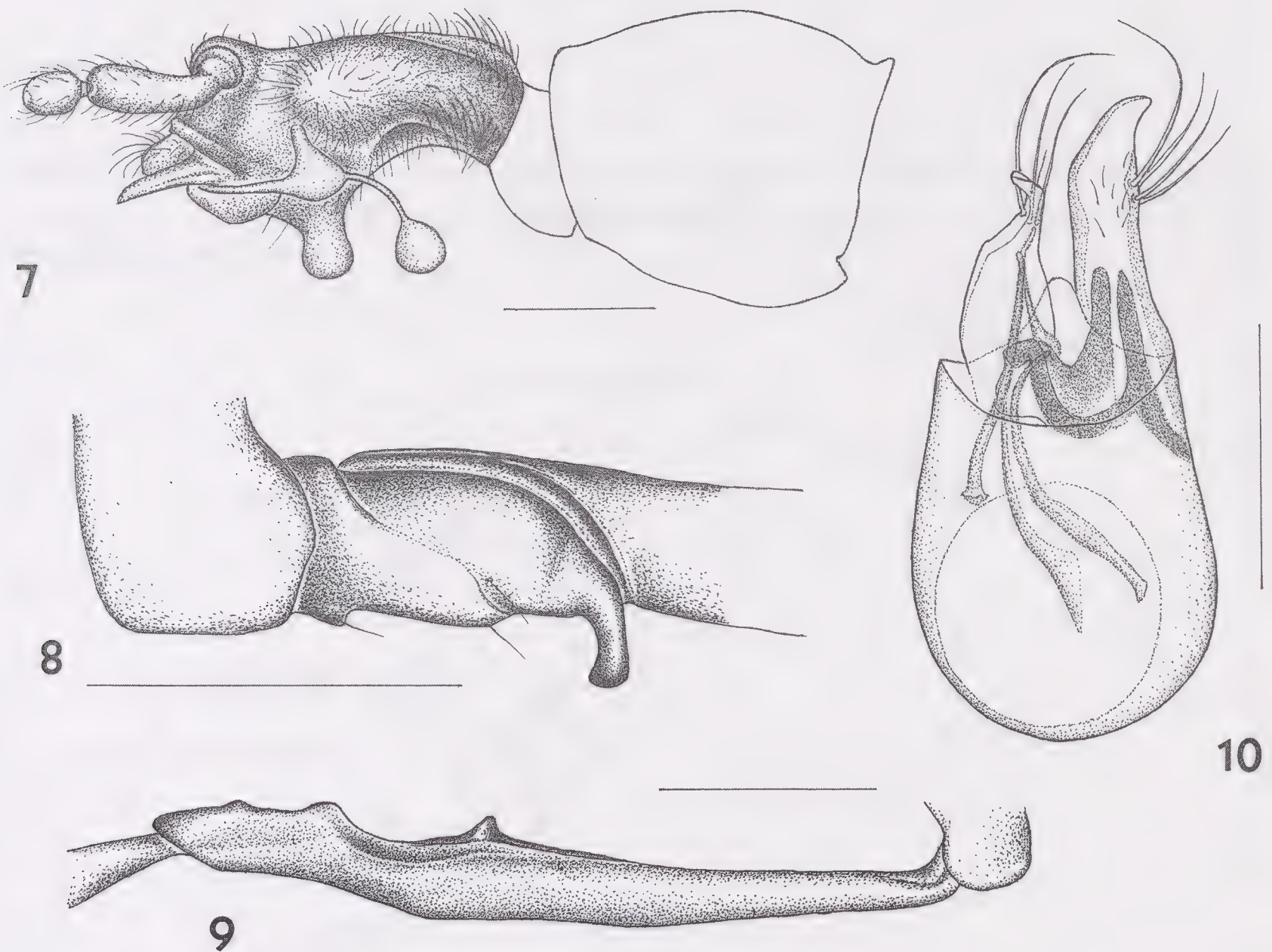


Figs. 2-6 *Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus* n. gen., n. sp.: fig. 2 - anterior part of the body (♀); fig. 3 - ♀ pygidium; fig. 4 - ♂ pygidium; fig. 5 - ♂ metasternum; fig. 6 - ♂ operculum.

significance of its so unusual maxillary palps, which at a first sight could remember those ones of Ctenistini?

And why this troglobious species has legs and antennae so “short”, if compared with the analogue appendices of similar troglobious Pselaphids from Balkans, like *Seracamaurops* Winkl., *Troglamaurops* Ganglb. or *Cordiamaurops* Nonv. & Pavić. (in print).

Summarising, many questions still remain without answer, but we hope that future explorers and scientists can have the ability and the opportunity to go beyond our arrival point.



Figs. 7-10 *Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus* n. gen., n. sp., ♂: fig. 7 - lateral view of the head (only the two first antennal segments and the basis of the maxillary palps are shown); fig. 8 - right metatrochanter; fig. 9 - protibia (left: tarsus; right: femur); fig. 10 - aedeagus in dorsal view. Scales correspond to 0,2 mm.

And, in occasions like this one, we cannot avoid to see once more confirmed a sentence of our common friend Achille Casale, who acutely underlined in 1998 that “also fascinating discoveries on field can still trouble the comfortable and sedentary classificational routine”...

DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTING PLACES

1. “Mala Birnjača” (figs. 12, 13). - The pit is situated on the northern slope of Kozjak mountain; the air distance is about 10 km N from Split.



Fig. 11 - Map of the Split region, with the position of the two investigated caves, marked with two asterisks (left: Mala Birnjača; right: Vranjača).

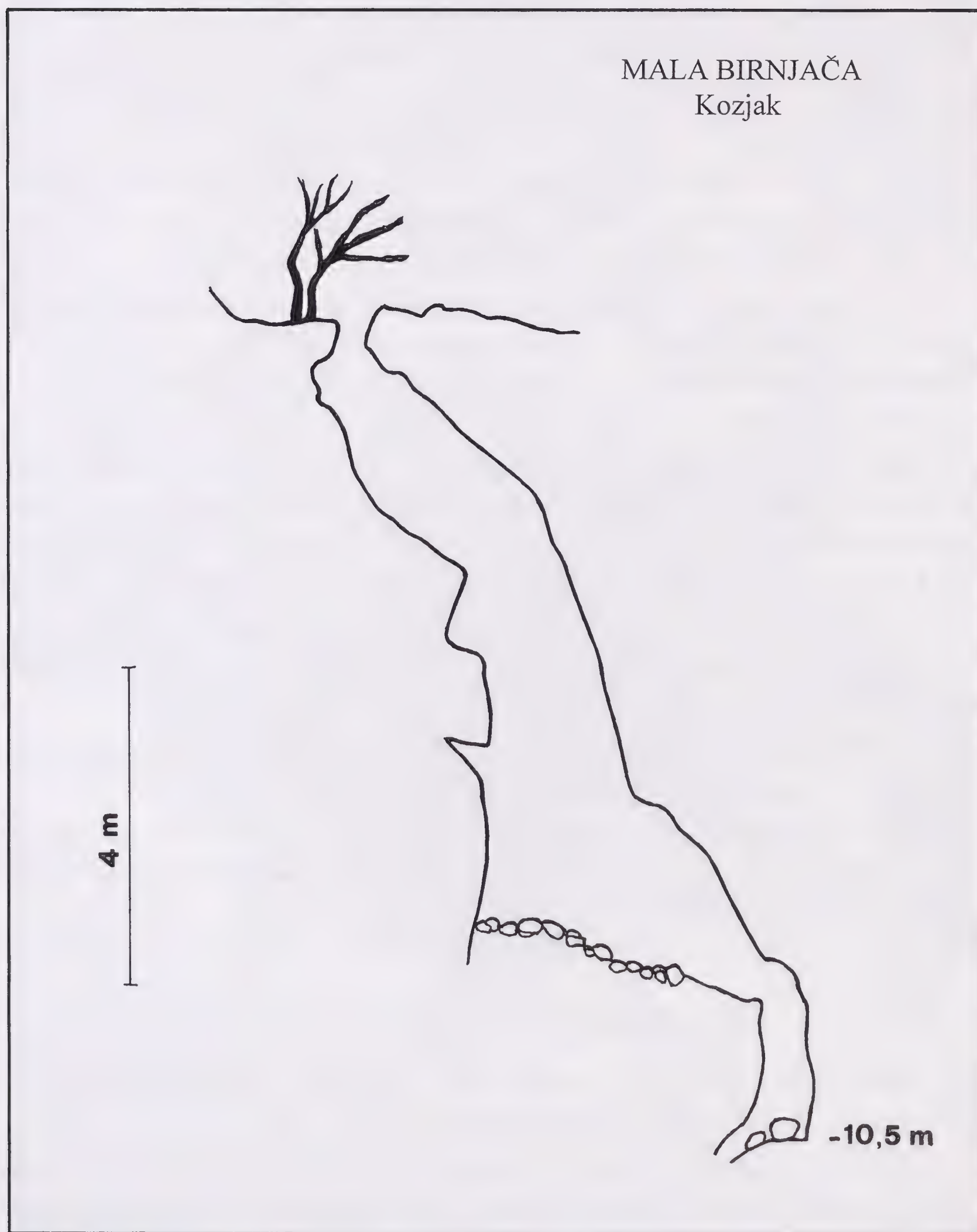


Fig. 12 - Section of the pit Mala Birnjača on mountain Kozjak (Dalmatia), from the original sketch by T. Rađa.

The pit entrance is of a triangular shape, very narrow ($0,6 \times 0,5$ m). The entrance is vertical and 8 m deep, and ends in form of a little hall of an elliptical shape ($3,5 \times 2,5$ m). The hall bottom is covered with stones and earth sediments without humus. In the north-eastern part of the hall there is a small opening of 0,5 m diameter leading to a pit of 1,8 m depth. At the end, the pit continues further on, but a man cannot go further. The total depth of the pit is 10,5 m.

As regards the speleological characteristics, it is a simple pit. It is humid during the whole year, but especially in winter.

2. “Vranjača” (figs. 14, 15). - The cave is situated in the area of the village Kotlenice (Dugo Polje) on the northern slope of Mosor mountain; the air distance is about 18 km NE from Split.

The Vranjača cave (Vranjača pećina or Vranjača spilja or Vranjača jama or Kotlenicehöhle, according to the different languages) is located at the bottom of a small dolina near a group of houses and it is closed by a gate.

The cave entrance is in the form of half-elliptical shape, about 8 m high and 6 m wide. In continuation, there is a huge hall mostly illuminated by daylight. The bottom is covered with earth and stones. The hall is about 55 m long. At the eastern part of the hall there is a narrow passage leading to an elliptical hall with a lot of stalagmites and stalactites. This hall is about 85 m long and 35 m wide. The total depth of the cave is 56 m.

According to its speleological characteristics, the Vranjača cave belongs to the group of semi-horizontal caves.

The cave is humid during the whole year and in the eastern hall there are some small water pools of accumulated dropping from the ceiling and the walls.

COMMENTS ON VRANJAČA CAVE

The discovery of a new cave dwelling Coleopteran in the “Vranjača” deserves some comments.

The first biospeleologists to visit the “Vranjača”, in 1903, were Franz Tax (1854-1921) from Graz (Austria) and Dr. Eduard Karaman (1849-1923), a physician from Split. They were lucky enough to collect there a new leptodirini beetle, described the same year by Prof. Dr. Giuseppe Müller (1880-1964) from Trieste as *Haplotropidius*



Fig. 13 - Entrance of the pit Mala Birnjača with T. Rađa just descending (Photo P. Tasić, February 1999).

taxi. Petar Novak (1879-1968), also a coleopterologist, who for decades was working in Split, a friend of both, reported (1952: 67) that Tax, in his lust for getting as many specimens as possible of "his" leptodirini, instructed a peasant from the neighbouring village Kotle-nice, owner of the ground where the cave is situated, to use traps. This method was employed so systematically, that very soon the species disappeared from the "Vranjača", and has never been found later there, for nearly a century.

Therefore a great surprise was aroused by the information, in 1907, that the Polish ornithologist and biospeleologist Ernst von Dombrowski, employed as an officer by the Austro-Hungarian administration in Mostar (Herzegovina), during a visit to the "Vranjača", collected there another new leptodirini beetle, described the same year as *Antroherpon dombrowskii* by the famous coleopterologist Victor Apfelbeck (1859-1934), from the Country Museum in Sarajevo (Bosnia). Petar Novak reported in his book that he was using traps for years unsuccessfully looking for this species, which seems to be extremely rare. The first junior author (G. N.), when attending the high school in Split, participated in these worthless efforts in the period 1928-1932. However, Novak succeeded in collecting a few *Antroherpon* in the "Vranjača" in 1910 and again in 1939.

Prof. Dr. Franz Netolitzky (1875-1945), another successful coleopterologist and biospeleologist from Graz, reported (1908: 439) in a lecture that he had also visited the cave "Vranjača" and that he succeeded in "obtaining" a specimen of *Antroherpon dombrowskii* from the above mentioned owner of the cave. He also endeavoured him to collect more specimens, but could obtain by him only a new blind trechine beetle, described in 1909 by Prof. G. Müller as *Paraduvallius netolitzkyi*, and which can be found in different caves of mountain Mosor, but not in the "Vranjača".

Later on, in the "Vranjača" the following beetles were also found: *Neotrechus dalmatinus dalmatinus* (Miller, 1861) (Carabidae, Trechini), a relatively common blind, troglobious species which occurs in the caves and pits of central and southern Dalmatia; *Laemostenus (Antisphodrus) cavicola* ssp. *aeacus* (Miller, 1861) (Carabidae, Sphodrini), widespread in caves and pits from Split to Dubrovnik; *Spelates grabowskii* Apfelbeck, 1907 (Leiodidae, Leptodirini), known also from other Dalmatian caves, and two occasional Cryptophagidae:

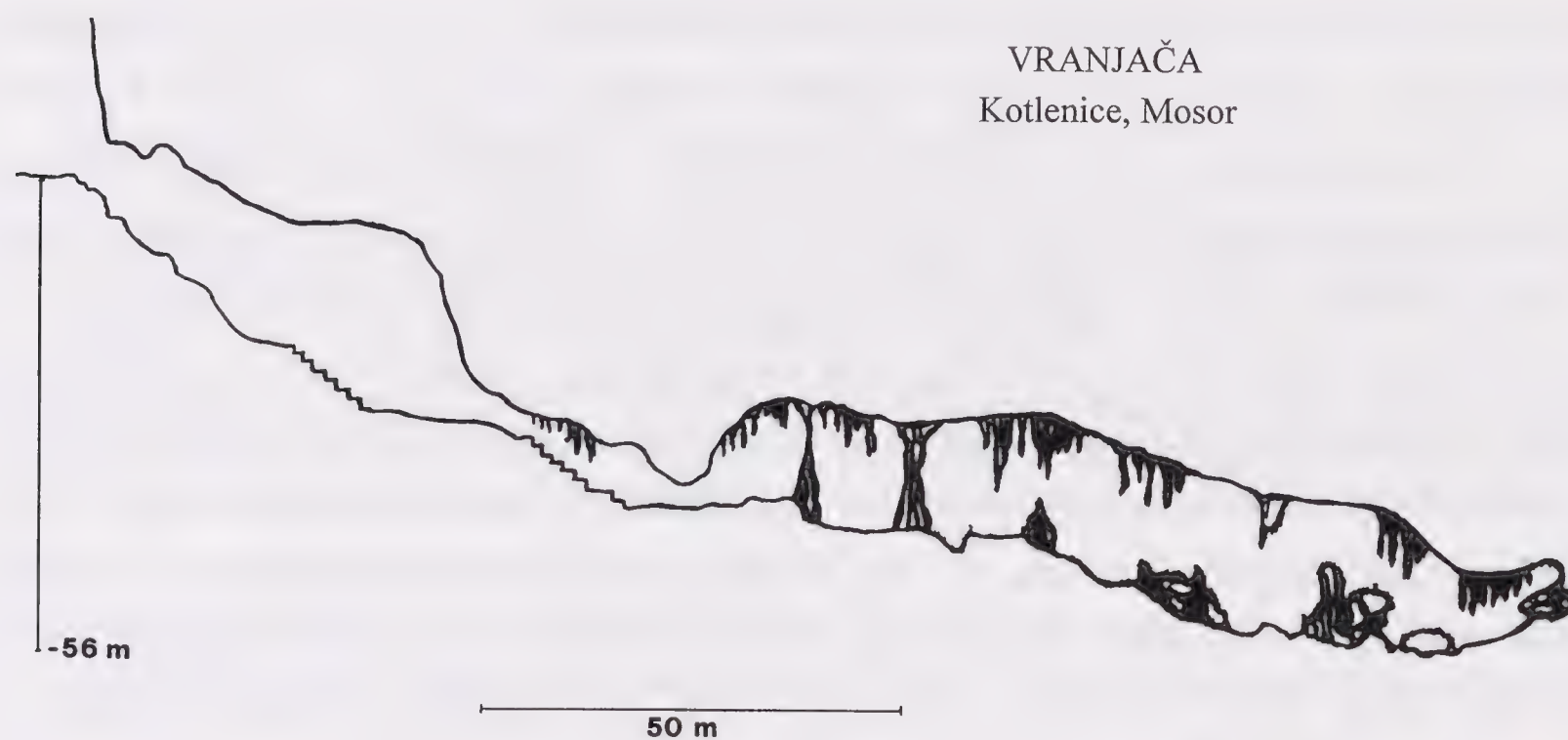


Fig. 14 - Section of the cave Vranjača on the northern slop of mountain Mosor (Dalmatia), from the original sketch by T. Rađa.



Fig. 15 - Interior of the cave Vranjača, close to the place where A. Colla found the new taxon (Photo M. Punda, 1985).

Cryptophagus distinguendus Sturm, 1845 and *C. scutellatus* Newman, 1834.

Subsequently, for nearly a century many biospeleologists and other entomologists visited this cave, as well as many other caves situated in that region and inhabited by a rich and diversified fauna. In particular, they were looking for interesting cave dwelling insects in the "Vranjača", but only recently the junior author A. C. did succeed to discover there a new and so interesting representative of Pselaphids; during his visit A. C. collected also four specimens of *Neotrechus dalmatinus*, one specimen of *Stalagtia hercegovinensis* (Nosek) (Arachnida, Dysderidae), identified by F. Gasparo, Trieste, and one specimen of *Neobisium* sp. (Pseudoscorpionida).

Dr. Fulvio Gasparo visited himself the cave in September 1998 but did not collect Pselaphids.

The "Vranjača" was also recorded by STROUHAL 1939 for *Alpiniscus (Illyrionethes) balthasari* (Frankenberger) (Crustacea, Isopoda) and by DEELEMEN-REINHOLD 1978 for *Troglohyphantes strandi* Abso- lon & Kratochvil (Arachnida, Linyphiidae).

In conclusion, diversifying collecting methods and visiting formerly not enough explored parts of these underground localities, additional, still unknown troglobionts can be found, even in often visited ones, such as cave "Vranjača".

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SUMMARY

The new troglobious taxon, found in two caves near the Croatian town of Split, has a so peculiar morphology that the Authors were obliged to erect also a new tribe (Thaumastocephalini) to be put into the supertribe Batrisitae.

The main characters of *Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus* are: presence of a pedunculate gular process and 2nd and 3rd segments of maxillary palps bringing exteriorly a thin filament ending in a spherical appendix.

The collecting places (Vranjača and Mala Birnjaca caves) are described and a history of old and recent researches in the localities is shortly outlined.

RIASSUNTO

Thaumastocephalini, nuova tribù di Pselaphinae per *Thaumastocephalus folliculipalpus* n. gen., n. sp., una nuova interessante specie troglobia della Dalmazia centrale (Croazia) (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Pselaphinae).

Gli Autori descrivono il nuovo genere e la nuova specie di Pselafide, i cui caratteri (es.: processo golare peduncolato, 2° e 3° articolo dei palpi mascellari forniti al lato esterno di un sottile filamento terminante a sfera, ecc.) sono talmente anomali da richiedere l'istituzione di una nuova tribù all'interno della supertribù Batrisitae.

Le peculiarità morfologiche del nuovo taxon, raccolto in pochi esemplari in due grotte dei dintorni di Split (Vranjača e Mala Birnjaca), sono ampiamente illustrate; sono inoltre narrate le circostanze che hanno portato alla sua scoperta e fornite notizie sulle ricerche biospeleologiche svolte in passato nella zona interessata.